

Engendering development in Muslim societies: actors, discourses and networks in Malaysia, Senegal and Sudan

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Arbeitspapier / working paper

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Nageeb, S., Sieveking, N., & Spiegel, A. (2005). *Engendering development in Muslim societies: actors, discourses and networks in Malaysia, Senegal and Sudan*. (Working Paper / Universität Bielefeld, Fakultät für Soziologie, Forschungsschwerpunkt Entwicklungssoziologie, 353). Bielefeld: Universität Bielefeld, Fak. für Soziologie, Forschungsschwerpunkt Entwicklungssoziologie. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-421576>

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Working Paper No. 353

**Engendering Development in Muslim Societies:
Actors, Discourses and Networks
in Malaysia, Senegal and Sudan**

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Bielefeld 2005

ISSN 0936-3408

The Research and the Methodology: An Introductory Overview

This paper will give an overview about the research project: “Negotiating Development: Translocal Gendered Spaces in Muslim Societies”¹ and the methodology adopted. It focuses on presenting preliminary results of the field work conducted in Malaysia, Senegal and Sudan including the main development discourses and the actors engaged in negotiating the various development concepts in the three countries under research. However, before focusing on the empirical findings of the field research, it is important to give an overview of the project and the methodology adopted for the research.

The idea of the project is to study the 'travelling' of development concepts and discourses such as gender equality, poverty and human rights. We concentrate on these global concepts as they provide a stage to study how various cultural forces are laying competing claims to shape the processes of social transformation both at the local and global levels.

The research aims at deconstructing the notion of cultural blocks by analysing the translocal networks and relations of women's NGOs, arguing that the negotiation of development concepts is embedded in a translocal space and is leading to the transformation of what is defined as local.

Particularly in Muslim societies and specifically after the events of September 11th 2001, development concepts are subject to multi-level negotiations for various reasons. On the one hand, global development concepts are debated to ensure their compatibility with the so called “Islamic identity” advocated by certain groups or by the state. Due to the ongoing international discourse and politics towards Islam these concepts become even more significant for the articulation of a Muslim identity of a society.

On the other hand global concepts of development are also negotiated by social actors who are engaged in the field of civil and political organisations, in order to make these concepts relevant to a specific local context. Along the same line goes the negotiation of these concepts by women's NGOs, who try to use strategies, form relations, create networks and set new discursive and non discursive practices in order to make the global development discourses a

¹ Cf. Lachenmann, Dannecker 2002.

local agenda. No less important are the negotiations processes between women's NGOs and the global development agencies. These processes are significant for understanding how globalisation works from below and how local interests and specificities are part of the global discourse.

The research concentrates on different Muslim societies, Senegal, Malaysia and Sudan, which experience different forms of Islamisation. The empirical focus is on female agency and the gendered structure of development processes. Various women's NGOs are studied in the respective countries to see how they are engaged in the processes of negotiating global development concepts and which strategies they develop and use. At the same time, the research seeks to understand how these negotiation processes are leading to the constitution of translocal spaces and what relevance such spaces have for the processes of social and political transformations in a specific context.

Concerning the methodology², the research combines a translocal and a networking approach. Thereby it is possible to study the interrelatedness of phenomena that are usually conceptualised in dichotomic categories like the generalising opposition of local / global, or the more empirical notions of civil organisation / state or state / society. Analysing comparative interaction is thus important for this approach. The interface approach, which is also applied for this research, enables us to study the interactive nature of the process of constituting agency. Finally the research follows empirically the relational dimensions of different social agents and institutions which might be culturally and geographically distant.

The constitution of space is a middle level approach adopted in the research to link the notion of agency to that of social structure. This means for example to examine how the world-views, strategies and relations of specific social agents are involved in constructing or deconstructing boundaries. The constitution of multidimensional spaces can be comprehended through describing how specific localities, built up through discourse, cultural practices and knowledge systems, are related. By studying the constitution of various spaces the research is retracing the ambiguous nature of the process of social transformation, which implies changes both at local and global levels.

² For more discussion on the research methodology for this project see (Nageeb 2005), to be published as Working paper, Sociology of Development Research Centre, Faculty of Sociology, University of Bielefeld.

Another methodological dimension of this research is the comparative framework. By comparing different Muslim societies we focus on various forms of networking, development discourses and the ways social spaces are constituted. At the same time the comparison hints at the specificity of the relations between women's organisations and other social actors, like the state, representatives of local Islam or other civil groups. The comparative approach means comparing by contextualising to show how the process of negotiating development is embedded in specific translocal and local contexts. Thereby global development debates are located in concrete political, historical and social frameworks. On this basis it is possible to develop typologies (of women NGOs, gender and Islam discourses, state development visions, women activists and interface encounters) which can be related to the social reality in the three different countries and help to outline the translocal dimensions of the process of negotiating development.

To give an idea about the different contexts of the research the following sections will focus on the major findings of the empirical research. The cases of Malaysia, Senegal and Sudan will hence be presented to shed light on the local development discourses, the actors engaged in the field of negotiating development, the processes of negotiation and the networking relations. In the conclusion the paper will highlight the preliminary results which will be considered for comparing the three cases.

Malaysia: Negotiating Development in a Limited Democratic Space

In the following section of this paper the emphasis will lie on the main development concepts that are locally negotiated by the civil society organisations in Malaysia and through which they are connected to global development discourses.

Development Process in Malaysia: Achievements and New Polarisation

Since independence Malaysia has experienced an unprecedented process of social and economic transformation. From a mainly rural society and a colonial economy that concentrated on the export of natural resources, namely palm oil, tin, and rubber, it developed into an mainly urban society (over 60%) with a diversified industry (Jomo K.S., Edwards 1993). This development is of course embedded in the changes of the global economic system, the new global division of labour, but it is also the result of 40 years of development policies of a developmentalist state with ever increasing authoritarian features. Since independence Malaysian development policy has always been based on a quantitative growth paradigm and rather neglected questions of social justice and equality (Bruton 1992). Especially since the 80s this trend got more pronounced and since then growth has been promoted not as an instrument for equity, but as a goal per se, even with the cost of producing social polarisation and inequality. Economic development went hand in hand with deep social transformation: urbanisation, the reshaping of ethnic spaces through the formation of a Malay middle class, the reshaping of gendered spaces through an increasing rate of participation of Malaysian women in formal economy (Othman 1998, 172), and the emergence of Islamic Revivalism and the politicisation of Islam (Camroux 1996; Nagata 1994), which partly got incorporated into state policies.³

The result of this kind of development policy has been a relatively successful industrialisation and also a general reduction of the overall poverty rate, from 50% in 1973 to 7,8% in 1999.⁴

³ Malaysia is a multi-ethnic society. Only little more than 50% of Malaysians citizens are ethnic ('indigenous') Malay, 34% are of Chinese and about 10% of Indian origin. Nevertheless, the Malaysian nation state is based on Malay political and cultural dominance: Malay language is declared official language, Islam is declared state religion, furthermore it was constitutionally fixed, that Prime Minister and chief minister of the individual states had to be Malay (Nagata 1997, 134). Although *jus solis* was introduced to convert the migrant population into Malaysian citizens, Malay primacy is secured in a series of provisions and policies, as the New Economic Policy (Nagata 1994, 69).

⁴ <http://www.worldbank.org/eapsocial/countries/malay/pov1.htm>

The state has been able to discursively and politically monopolise the classical development issues, like rural development, within a framework of authoritarian democracy, and has left no or little space for civil society and NGO activities (Weiss, Hassan 2003). Despite considerable poverty reduction, for instance, the general income inequality remained untouched and is one of the highest in the region. So it is also a process which continuously produces new fractions, new frictions, and new inequalities in society. An example for these new polarisations in the Malaysian society is the situation of the urban poor and plantation workers who settle on land that is going to be prepared for the building of industrial or housing complexes and who then get evicted from their lands. Another example is the situation of female factory workers within the highly oppressive working context of the free trade zones. Still another problem is the lack of civil rights, the few possibilities of participatory processes in development and politics, and of course issues of gender equality within a context of Islamisation and an economy, which is increasingly deregulated.

These are the issues where NGOs in Malaysia plug themselves into development discourses, into the debate on the question about what kind of development is suitable for whom, and where they try to carve out democratic space for a public debate. Several, partly ethnically defined and to some extent overlapping NGO networks are grouped around a specific topic and work on different notions of development: Firstly, the network of a socialist oriented anti-globalisation movement pushes for the rights of urban poor, plantation workers and female factory workers. This network takes up issues related to the uneven economic development initiated from above without participation of the population. This movement is mainly Indian dominated as the vast majority of plantation workers are of Indian origin. Secondly, the network of classical human rights organisations pushes for civil rights, freedom of press and democratisation in an authoritarian political regime. And last but not least, the network of women's organisations negotiates question of women's rights and gender equality. Both, the human and the women's rights organisations are mainly Chinese and to some extent Indian dominated. Lately, since the upcoming of the Reformasi movement after the economic crises in the late 90s an increases participation of Malay women can be observed, not least because of the creation of organisations like Sisters in Islam, to be treated later on.

Whereas the state's focus lies on economic development with an Islamic (and hence Malay) outlook, most NGOs take up discourses with a clear critical perspective towards the Malaysian political and societal system. As a consequence there is virtually no co-operation

between NGOs and the state and rather a vacuum of NGOs in the classical development field. The monopolisation of this classical development area by the state leads to a dual discourse and to a certain incompatibility of state and NGO development discourses on the national level. Community based social mobilising and advocacy organisations tend to define their role as that of critical observers rather than as supporters and implementers of the government social development policies. Whereas for socialist oriented anti-globalisation movement and the human rights movement the relation with the state takes the form of a more or less open confrontation, most of the women's NGOs choose the strategy of a 'critical engagement' with the state. This overall distanced and critical perspective of the Indian and Chinese dominated NGOs is shaped to a significant extent by the process of nation building in Malaysia, which clearly identifies state institutions with Malay identity and which is based on Malay cultural and political dominance.

Localising and Globalising Discourses on Women's Rights

For Malaysian women's NGOs, campaigns on violence against women within a rights based framework are an entry point for negotiations of gender equality with the semi-authoritarian state at the local level. At the same time this issue constitutes an important link to a global discourse on women's rights and to a trans-local women's movement.

We find very difficult at the local level to use the word human rights, which is such a bad word, when you are talking about women's human rights, wow! To commoners or to people on the street, it is equal to anti-government. So [...] we have to find a different terminology for ourselves. Of course violence and issues like that, are easy, very nice issues to talk about, to start with. Now, unless you are really meeting women friends who have been in the movement for long time, but if you are talking about the young activists, some of them maybe are not comfortable to use the words 'human right' or say 'I am a human rights activist, I am a women's rights activist at the same time.' So, because of that kind of atmosphere, to be able to promote that concept of human rights among the NGOs and also to certain women's group, it is very not easy at all. (female activist, 06.10.04)

In Malaysia, as the analysis of the empirical material has shown, the discourse about violence against women, gender equality and women's rights constitutes a significant site for the making of a public space, where women from different ethnic groups can build up solidarity,

since this issue had not been part of the hyper-ethnitisised politics promoted by the state (Mohamad 2002). The transformational potential of this public space, which women's organisations build up through strategies of popularisation of feminist ideas, is grounded in the possibility to link gender questions to broader societal issues like democratisation. The transformational potential is also related to the high trans-local connectivity, that the discourse on violence against women offers. Using this concept, Malaysian women's groups are connected to the global discourse on violence against women, which at the moment seems to be very prominent among transnational NGOs, as Amnesty International, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM) are launching global campaigns on violence against women. The most important Malaysian women's organisations working on specific notions of violence against women (Women's Aid Organisation working on domestic violence, All Women's Action Society working on sexualised violence like rape and sexual harassment, Sisters in Islam working on violence from an Islamic perspective) are all highly connected with other women's groups especially from other Asian countries. These groups participated at the workshop "Current Issues and Challenges in Crisis Intervention Work on Violence against Women" at the "Asia Pacific NGO Forum 2004 on Beijing +10" with the aim to develop a feminist approach for crisis intervention.

Most women's groups in Malaysia take up the relevant universal declarations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to legitimise their work. The Women's Aid Organisation is explicitly undertaking the project to localise CEDAW to the Malaysian context. The localisation of these declarations and conventions is embedded within the strategies to open up space for political dissent within a limited democratic framework. Global conventions are important instruments to pressurise the government to change its policies. The negotiations on CEDAW can be analysed as an important interface between the women's movement and the state. "The convention is the tool in areas where we have difficulties at the national level, areas that we already work on but that we need to push forward" (female activist, 21.08.04). The convention is a source of legitimisation within the national context. The global is perceived as giving new power to local actors. Whereas women's organisations work on their own locally and nationally important issues, they still need global support to put pressure on the government.

Through the networks that women's organisations establish, global concepts get localised. Furthermore, these networks contribute to the constitution of a trans-local space, where alternative notions of development or Islam are being shaped. Malaysian NGOs make explicit use of trans-local comparisons, links and networks, as they refer to other country examples to reflect upon their own situation, to show social problems in the own local context and to ground their demands. Trans-local networking can thus be seen as a crucial practice to constitute globalised discourses on identity. The Committee for Asian Women, which is a regional organisation of female workers, organised a regional workshop on globalisation with female workers from Malaysia (mainly Indian women), Thailand, Korea and Sri Lanka aiming at empowerment through comparison of different local contexts. Female factory workers from the different countries shared their working experiences and discussed about cultural and social changes brought by globalisation. Through these regional networks discourses, ideas and visions, which are based on specific local knowledge and local experiences, are exchanged and a sense of globally effective processes of social change is produced.

Sisters in Islam, an organisation of Muslim professional women, who are engaging in the debate of women's rights in Islam by explicitly using religious argumentations, carried out a comparative research on different Shari'ah laws in different Muslim countries in order to question the sacred character of these laws and to open up room for manoeuvre. Within the CEDAW process different country reports are compared in order to learn about the best practices. Global development concepts and the respective treaties and mechanisms are positively appropriated by the Malaysian women's NGOs as tools for gaining power in the process of negotiation with the government and other conservative groups.

However, to make these conventions and values effective in the local context, these universal declarations and concepts undergo, and have to undergo multiple processes of negotiation, as they are rejected by some parts of the population as alien to their specific culture, tradition, or religion. Especially the subordination of women is justified as part of tradition and culture. Confronted with this kind of difficulties NGOs develop different strategies in order to "bring the conventions back home". One Indian activist, who works especially on a programme on violence against women in the Indian community argues. "We cannot talk straight away about culture, we cannot take the approach of saying 'we have our rights' or 'these are women's rights'. Because even the women believe that this is our culture. We have to go very slowly

asking 'do your children have birth certificate, identity card, is your marriage registered? Does it have to be that way? Is our culture a culture of violence? Do we have to accept it?' So we just keep throwing it back to them." (female Indian activist, 10.07.05)

In this grassroots approach the 'threatening' term rights, which might be conceived as alien to the local culture and tradition, is avoided and localised through a translation into everyday experiences of women. This strategy aims at analysing, questioning and changing the meaning of 'culture' promoted by one specific group, mainly men, in order to maintain power relations. While renegotiating the content of a specific culturally defined identity, the term tradition is strategically used and transformed. This implies not only questioning the authority of certain definitions of culture but really rewriting culture and history from a feminist point of view.

One outstanding example for this strategy is a "Muslim feminism", as it is put forward by Sisters in Islam, who try to advocate for women's rights on the grounds of religion. This is not done by rejecting the universalism of human rights, but rather by building bridges and by searching for roots in their own cultural and religious context for these rights and values. Because of the institutionalisation of religion through the family law and the increasing politicisation of religion in the public sphere, it seems necessary for Muslim women activists to develop a strategy that reflects these characteristics, and that enables them to communicate successfully with the respective authorities. This strategy consists in "adopting the language of the enemy", as a Malaysian activist argued, in order to deconstruct discriminatory practices and ideas that are legitimised by certain interpretations of religious texts. Using religion and religious arguments does not necessarily mean opposing secular values or universal human rights. It is a reaction and a strategy in a context where only arguments that are deduced from the religious texts are recognised as valid knowledge. It seems that in the highly globally and trans-locally connected Malaysian NGO scene discourses of othering between Western and Asian culture are likely to be rejected. It is rather a notion of global and trans-cultural solidarity among women that is prominent among the urban and cosmopolitan NGO activists.

Islamisation and the De-Legitimisation of a Multi-Ethnic Public Sphere

In Malaysia, the process of Islamisation is clearly shaping the constitution of a public sphere. This is due to the intertwined constructions of ethnicity and religion in Malaysian multiethnic

society. Also discourses and strategies of women's organisations are shaped by the social changes brought by the process of Islamisation. In the specific Malaysian multiethnic and multi-religious society Islamisation leads towards the re-enforcement of separate ethnic spaces as well as towards the deepening and institutionalisation of ethnic boundaries in all aspects of daily life, between Muslims and non-Muslims. This includes also government development policies, which differentiate between ethnic groups. The following quotation from an interview with an activist from Alaigal, an Indian based grassroots organisation clearly shows how housing policies are ethnited:

People tend to compare how the Malays, all the Malays are Muslim, how the Muslim get subsidies for this and that, how is their quota for this and that. So, there is a natural tendency to compare. Like here in Ipoh for example, we don't have a single kampung, single Malay village facing eviction. All are villages of Indian and Chinese. Here the state takes care of Malay villages. Maybe UMNO needs them. There is no problem as far as Malay villages are concerned. But definitely the Indian and Chinese have the problem. [...] The government looks after the Malay you know, and the anger is always transferred to the Malay villagers, not to the government. So, we have a job of getting the thing right for them. We see a real 'divide and rule' policy, a poor Malay villager might get a crumb, he is not getting the main thing. And why does he get the crumb? Because the system doesn't want us to unite. That's the main thing. So, that time the government talk so much about unity and harmony and all that. But when the government settles people on land, housing land, it segregates. And we have the job to explain to the people. Yes, there are policies, definitely, and it does make it harder for us to mobilise. Try to get Malays in, it is not that easy. (Indian female activist, 22.09.04)

This passage illustrates the institutionalisation of ethnic identities within state development policies and shows how this institutionalisation re-enforces the image of a Malay ownership of the state. Furthermore, the quotation reveals one of the most critical consequences of the process of the state driven Islamisation: the de-legitimisation of the idea of an inter-ethnic, inter-cultural and inter-religious public sphere. Alaigal is member of the Movement of Oppressed People, a socialist oriented network that comprises indigenous groups, Indian plantation workers and as well as Malay rice farmers and urban squatters. Although this multiethnic network manages to build up solidarity across ethnic lines on specific issues, e.g. within campaigns criticising national housing programmes, the solidarity remains on fragile

grounds, as the interview shows. Because of the perceived differences in the treatment of different ethnic groups by state authorities, it is especially difficult to establish solidarity between Indian plantation worker who are evicted from their lands and Malay villagers.

This trend of a ethnically divided public sphere is also relevant for the women's movement. On the one hand, it became particularly difficult for non-Muslims to talk about issues concerning Islam and social changes related to Islamisation. On the other hand the inner-Islamic discourse itself is extremely dominated by traditional male religious authorities, who claim knowledge about the 'true' and 'only' Islam. Muslim women are not entitled to engage in this discourse because in principle only men are recognised as religious experts, not to mention non-Muslim. This creates special problems for a cosmopolitan women's movement. Women activists start to create alternative modes of knowledge and expertise, questioning the authority of conservative, male, academic Islamic scholars. Their new expertise is based on everyday life experiences. Their legitimisation to engage in the public sphere is brought forward on the basis of experiencing the consequences of gender discrimination. The creation of separate NGOs for Muslim women and the "adopting the language of the enemy"- strategy can be seen as another solution for this dilemma. Muslim women in other Muslim societies, where religion is not that politicised as a marker of ethnic boundaries, can more easily argue from a secular perspective and even refuse to argue from a religious perspective. In Malaysia it seems to be rather difficult for Malay women to adopt a secular perspective because of the inflation of religious and ethnic identity.

Senegal: Grounding Global Development Concepts

What are the main development issues in Senegal and how are global development concepts negotiated in local arenas? To answer these questions it is necessary to get first of all an idea of the political, economic and socio-cultural context, before turning to the main actors and development issues. Finally, by focussing on a specific interface, the process of grounding the concepts of gender equality and rights among local women's associations will be analysed.

The "Social Contract" Between the Secular State and Local Muslim Brotherhoods

When Senegal became independent in 1960 the constitutional and legal structures of the state were transplanted in all essential respects from the French system. Its commitment to the principles of secularism has never wavered, with one exception: the highly contested Family Code, which contains an option for Muslims to follow a version of Islamic law, adapted from the Sharià. The Senegalese state stands for a western oriented modernisation project, guided in the beginning by Senghor's idea of "African socialism" - a vision that has in the meantime been replaced by the principles of globalised liberalism. Since 1981 a multi-party-system is established and especially since the elections in 2000, when opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade became president, the hope that a democratisation process would start was rising.

Senegal is a predominant Muslim society (with 95% of the population declaring themselves Muslim), and experiencing an ongoing Islamisation process. The dominant forms of local Islam are the Sufi-brotherhoods, that are internally differentiated (the most important are the Tidjanes and Murides). This contributes to a religious pluralism that is part of the Senegalese national identity, which is characterised by cultural pluralism, and ethnic and linguistic diversity. All these symbolic systems overlap within the complex stratifications of society. Which features of identity are actually dominating depends on the situative context - ethnic or religious boundaries become only partly relevant and have never played any significant role in the election processes.

What has in contrast been very important during the elections in Senegal is the so called "social contract" (Cruise O'Brien 1992) between the state and the marabouts, the

representatives of the local Muslim brotherhoods. The local brotherhoods manage the relations between the mostly rural population and the government, for example in terms of votes or paying taxes. In return they receive from the state political protection and economic advantages that are partly redistributed to the population. This system of patron client relations, based on a consensual strategy of non-confrontation, has been a guarantee for stability - although the societal projects of the two actors of the contract seem quite incompatible: the western modernisation project pushed forward by the secular state on the one side, and the maintenance of Islamic tradition by the dominant Sufi orders on the other.

But obviously these different visions of development are negotiated at different interfaces and in social spaces that are cautiously kept apart. These spaces are differentiated symbolically through the use of language: French (the official language) by the government, Wolof (the most widely spoken national language) or other local languages and categorical rejection of French by the local Sufi Islam. There is also a differentiation in the sense of physical space: The modern state being associated with the urban centre of Dakar, its administrative buildings and symbols of western capitalism, whereas the Sufi tradition is more intimately related to the rural areas, where the majority of the population (almost 60%) lives.

However, the distinction between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' is a symbolic one that tends to obscure the fact that the two sides interact and take active part in the process of social transformation. The state has left its marks in the administrative structures of the rural communities and the brotherhoods have their own urban symbols of power, where the seats of the respective general Khalifs are located and annual pilgrimages take place. The most salient example is Touba, the holy city of the Murides, that has become the second important economic centre of the country (unofficially, as its economic potential relies mostly on extra- and illegal structures, cf. Guèye 2002).

Nowadays the "social contract" is put into question by the growing dissatisfaction of the population. This might be the chance for a third development project represented by the reformist Islamic movement. It can be characterized by the vision of a translocal Islam, that is negotiated at different levels of society, mainly in the academic milieu, but not restricted to educated elites. Its critique not only of state promoted 'westernisation' but also of the 'un-Islamic' practices of the established local brotherhoods is very present in public discourses. Only partially institutionalised, the reformist Islamic project is constantly changing faces and

socially much more heterogeneous than state-modernism or Sufi-traditionalism. It gains importance due to the declining power of the marabouts in terms of their spiritual authority and the inability of the state to come to grips with the ongoing economic crisis.

Conceptualising Development: Issues and Actors

The Senegalese economy, based on agriculture (mainly groundnut, rice, cotton), fishing and phosphate, experiences a unprecedented crisis since periods of severe droughts in the 70ies, the implementation of structural adjustment programs and the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994. Demographically this has lead to a rural exodus, massive migration and a process of urbanisation without industrialisation. In spite of the massive engagement of international donors and the efforts of the Senegalese state to fulfil “international standards” the basic problem remains poverty. Actually an estimated 54% of the population is living under the soil of poverty. This determines the main development agenda: poverty reduction, with a special focus on women, as they are classified as the most “vulnerable” group (by the government as well as NGOs).

Important development issues that are immediately related to poverty-reduction are education (illiteracy rate among women is almost 70%) and health (also predominantly concerning women especially in the domains of reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention – although the rate is low, the tendency is towards a feminisation of the disease). Development projects in these domains address mainly women. Almost all projects include micro-finance-programmes, aimed to facilitate income-generating activities, as it is assumed that without the perspective of an economic profit women would not participate in adult literacy training or in consciousness raising campaigns. Although the micro-finance approach has been criticised because of the high level of interest rates and low remunerations, it is still maintained and perpetuated in local initiatives to provide social security through decentralized financial structures, such as credit and saving groups.

The structures of local poverty-reduction projects contribute to the large associative sector, that is particular for Senegal. Women play a significant role in this sector although they don't constitute a single force. Their participation can be characterised by diverse interests and their organisational structures are embedded in different social spaces. An important dimension is the peasant movement, which has been strongly supported by women (the majority of the

members being women, Lachenmann et al. 1990, XVIII). It emerged in the 70ies, with autonomous village-based associations that were unified in a national federation (FONGS). On the local level it overlaps with the heterogeneous female associative movement.

The landscape of women organisations in Senegal is vast, comprising a pluralism of structures that are neither mutually exclusive nor necessarily connected. Most recurrent are so-called ‘traditional’ female associations, based on kinship, affinity, locality or field of activity – like age groups, neighbourhood or village associations, mutual savings groups or associations based on shared religious practice. Alongside these informal patterns of social organisation, a range of formal structures exist, which are recognised by the state. To be able to relate to the government or other development institutions women have to get registered either as a kind of non-profit organisation, ranging from simple “groupements de promotion féminine” (GPF) to NGOs, or in an association with economic interest, like the widespread “groupements d’intérêt économique” (GIE), that links the organisation to the formal economic sector.

Supporting the formation of GPFs to mobilise women, especially in rural areas, has been an essential part of the state’s development politics. Women’s advancement (“la promotion féminine”) was an important ideological element in the nation-building-process since Senghor, serving at the same time as a legitimising strategy for the government in power (Lachenmann 2001b, 85). Several national structures and institutions were founded and established with this intention. The first National Action Plan for Senegalese Women (“Plan d’action national de la femme sénégalaise”) was elaborated in 1982, and in 1990 a ministry in charge of the condition of women and children was created, which then has been given diverse appellations and is most commonly identified as the ministry of family (current appellation: “Ministère de la famille, du développement social et de la solidarité nationale”).

Nevertheless, women as producers and economic actors have been roughly neglected by the state as well as the international donor agencies, and the perspectives of an economic advancement, through the formation of GIEs and the integration in national or regional economic development plans, almost exclusively oriented towards the male population (Lachenmann 2001b, 88; Lachenmann 2001a, 204). The majority of female associations, formal as well as informal organisations, although economically motivated, are concentrating on securing livelihood on a day to day basis and are rather conservative concerning the social and gender order. Thereby the marginalisation of female economy is perpetuated.

The rising of the Senegalese women's movement since the 70ies thus constitutes a counter-force, challenging the established gender-order and calling for the transformation of society. The international context of the first world conference on women (Mexico 1975) and the following UN women's decade has deeply influenced its formation. At a later stage the Beijing conference (1995) and its preparatory process during the African platform, held in Dakar in 1994 gave important impulses to its dynamics, organisational structures and networks. Whereas the fight for women's rights and access to positions of decision making became quite an important issue for Senegalese NGOs, the more general issue of human rights was never really a hot topic in Senegal (president Wade has been decorated in 2004 by the International League of Human Rights for his efforts in the defence of Human Rights).

Senegal has ratified all the international conventions about eliminating any form of discrimination against women (CEDAW ratified in 1985 without reservations, the protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women ratified in 2004) and has also adopted laws penalizing violence against women. There is not much difference between the agenda of NGOs and the state - in the "National Action Plan for Women" one can find for example the same objectives and strategies as in the programs of the most prominent women NGOs. This is due to a very strong donor orientation of the state and the NGOs. At the same time they are engaged in a strategic partnership to compete the influence of popular Islamic movements. Although in the national legislation some clauses still exist that contradict the CEDAW convention, both the government and the NGOs actually blame the local socio-cultural patterns as the major constraint for women to claim their rights.

Negotiating Gender Equality in Terms of Women's Rights

The manifold interrelations that exist between state and civil society in Senegal make it very difficult to draw a clear boundary between the respective domains. A telling example for the joint effort of government and civil society to establish a certain vision of development is the recent paper concerning the new "National Strategy for Equity and Gender Equality in Senegal" ("Stratégie Nationale pour l'Égalité et l'Équité de Genre au Sénégal": SNEEG, République du Sénégal 2005). It has been elaborated with the support of the United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA/Senegal) in a cooperation of diverse ministries, together with political parties, syndicates, a range of national and international NGOs, networks and various

international donor institutions. The strategy paper is a continuation of a process that started with the study on “Senegalese Women by the Year 2015” (République du Sénégal / Ministère de la Femme de l'Enfant et de la Famille 1993), funded by the UN. The study reflected on the main weaknesses of the National Action Plan for Senegalese Women and its application, that had been revealed by an assessment in 1990.

The SNEEG aims at linking up with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), covering the same period of planning. By taking up the essential criticisms concerning the insufficient gender approach of the PRSP as well as the former National Action Plan for Women, the SNEEG is explicitly formulated to fit to a “global frame of reference”, as constituted for example by the Beijing Conference on women, the Millennium Goals and the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It is based on an account of the general socio-cultural, economic and political context, which it is claimed to present an “analysis of the actual situation concerning equity and gender equality in Senegal”. However, the paper is hardly analytical as it does refer to the notion of “gender” and mentions some basic facts concerning the “fundamental inequality” between men and women, but does not really explore gender relations and concrete policy issues and institutions. Thus in its outlook the SNEEG refers to a global development discourse and responds to the expectations of Senegal's international partners but hardly includes any reflection on the dynamics at the interfaces with local organisations, which are actually involved in the implementation of national legislation and development plans.

The problems of such outward and image oriented politics become evident in the process of ‘translating’ the official development concepts into local discourses. A telling example is the ongoing discussion concerning the reform of the Family Code, however, not mentioned in the SNEEG. Yet it constitutes a domain in which women's organisations, NGOs and trade unions have been consistently engaged, notably since the mid-eighties. Since its ratification in 1972 the code has been highly contested, and the efforts for its implementation by the state have been mostly unsuccessful. De facto the code is largely ignored by the population and treated as something alien to local culture and religion. It is associated with Western feminism and called by its opponents the “Women's Code”.

In 2005 the most important national network of women's NGOs in Senegal, the “Réseau Siggil Jigee” (which had significantly participated in the elaboration of the above mentioned

strategy paper on equity and equality), launched a nation-wide campaign for the modification of the code in the sense of implementing the notion of gender equality. A central topic for the intended reform is the concept of family authority, which should be changed from “paternal authority” to “parental authority”, addressing both father and mother as responsible for the children. Another aspect is the modification of an article that regulates financial rights and duties, which are still unequal.

An essential strategy in the NGO-campaign is the use of a religious argumentation, elaborated by “progressive” Islamic scholars on the basis of Qur’an interpretations. The state adopts the same strategy, although using not only a Muslim but also a Christian argumentation for gender equality, in order to maintain a balanced position towards the different religions and avoid any direct confrontation with Islamic authorities. In any case the reference made to theological interpretations is significant because otherwise the dimension of religion is very carefully left out in national development discourse, be it articulated by the state or by NGOs.

In the course of the campaign for gender equality, discussions with local women’s groups were organised all over the country to popularise the knowledge about the Family Code and the arguments for its reform. In one of these discussions, which had been organised among members of a GPF in a suburban quarter of Kaolack (a city in the central region of Senegal) the notion of gender equality was introduced by the local NGO activist as follows:

*We don’t want equality - we want to be given our rights, because we pay ... [she explains: women pay more taxes than men; women give birth, but cannot declare their children, care for the members of the family, but cannot assume their responsibility officially, etc...]. When we speak of equality it is not equality, in short, but the equality of rights, because God has created us different.*⁵

What becomes clear in these formulations: The speaker – by the way the local representative of “Women in Law and Development in Africa” (WILDAF), a pan-African network for women’s rights and development – rejects the abstract idea of equality. When talking to the local women’s group, she asserts the essential differences between men and women as an unquestionable given (by God). At the same time she brings forward the notion of rights,

⁵ “Si on parle d’égalité ce n’est pas l’égalité tout court, mais l’égalité de droit, car Dieu nous a créé différents.”

understood as something acquired through social and economic interactions (but not as automatically given to everybody by the state's constitution or an international convention).

Women's rights are discussed here in terms of concrete social practices and a locally grounded logic of reciprocity, which characterise the interactions of the participants who are all not only members of the formally constituted GPF, but also of diverse informal female associations. Thereby the women know very well about each other's social and economic situation. They discuss their family problems and build up networks in which social security is assured through moral obligations. In mutual savings groups, where social control is quite severe, but also in age groups, neighbourhood or religious associations, rules exist which determine the rights and duties of the members. With the notion of "equality of rights" the women thus appropriate a global vision, by giving it a meaning which refers to their own way of handling the local reality of ongoing social transformations and changing family structures due to the economic conditions, they all experience and share with each other.

Sudan: Negotiating Development and the State Islamist Identity

“Building the Sudan of Peace” represents the slogan that reveals the local visions and discourses on development. The phrase is increasingly used, particularly after the signing of the Peace agreement between the North and South of Sudan in January 2005 in Naivasha, Kenya. This agreement ends a civil war that lasted for more than two decades. According to this agreement Sudan will be governed for six year by a transitional government where the political power is shared between the National Islamic Front (NIF), which is the party currently ruling Sudan, and the Sudanese People Liberation Movement (SPLM). After the transitional period Sudan will have to face the question of unity or separation between the North and the South. The local development agendas are more or less based on activating Naivasha's six protocols, particularly those related to the changes in the political system and the division of wealth between the North and the South.

In order to understand the nature of the engagement of civil organisations in general and women's NGOs in particular in the process of negotiating development one should refer to the translocal context in which the local agenda of development is embedded. The peace agreement was realised after intensive international pressures on both parties, the government of NIF in the north and the SPLM. However this pressure became only effective after the events of September 11th.

One could say that the events of the September 11th and their global consequences in the sense of “war against terrorism” marked a change in the nature of the regime in Sudan. The regime is attempting to negotiate its Islamist identity by opening up for a more democratic system that gives room for the participation of other political and civil factions. At the same time the opening up of Sudan for international investment particularly in the newly booming oil business necessitates reforms of the economic policies to support the move to privatisation and to make the market policies more attractive for international investors. Additionally there is also a tendency to change the general political environment to make the country more attractive for such economic activities.

Simultaneously, the acceleration of the situation in Darfur is putting Sudan and the Sudanese regime more and more under the focus of the international community. The Darfur conflict opened an international discussion on the possibility of UN sanctions, should the government

of Sudan prove to be not cooperative and serious about the disarming of the militant groups. Thus it is no wonder to feel and see the change in the general political and cultural outlook of the country compared to the situation in the 1990s. There are huge numbers of NGOs and civil society organisations increasingly engaging in various political and developmental activities. Furthermore the international organisations are more interested, active and present in Sudan. At the same time various restrictive laws and policies, like the emergency law, are deactivated, which allow such a political change to take place.

The opening up of the political atmosphere as well as the interest of donors' agencies in supporting the peace building process is leading to an ambiguous situation: on the one hand there is a general feeling of hope, excitement and a positive perception of these changes, on the other hand there is also an attitude of doubtfulness and uncertainty, which is related to the internal politics of the regime. Most of the people in Sudan are concerned whether the peace agreement could ever bring democracy to Sudan, since the NIF regime considers itself as an umbrella which can shelter all other political parties. Another reason for the general doubtfulness around the planned political changes is related to the privatisation policy which NIF is following. Through this policy NIF members are considered to be the main and real controllers of the market. Whether they will be active as members of the government or not, the economic power they accumulated will grant them an influential political role in Sudan's political scenery in the future.

However, this feeling of ambiguity is not only grounded in the nature of the local political and economic structures, but it is also translocally embedded. To understand its translocal dimension one needs to refer to the conflict in Darfur. Locally the excitement with peace is "muddied" by the conflict in Darfur. The Darfur conflict brings another concern to the picture. Mainly there is a conspiracy discourse about the presence and interest of the international community in Sudanese affairs. Basically this is related to the USA policies in the region and in particular in the Muslim world. Through this conspiracy discourse the issue of the policy of the US towards Iraq and Afghanistan is often revised to explain the role of the international community in the local affairs. The strong media campaign of the USA on the conflict in Darfur is perceived by many Sudanese as a strategy to calm down the debates, especially inside the USA, on the shortcomings of the US war in Iraq. In addition this discourse is also supported by an economic view relating the interest of Bush's administration in Darfur's issue to a hidden agenda of the US to compete with the growing Chinese interest

in Africa. One of the biggest investment sites for China nowadays is Sudan. This expanded economic interest and military relation of the Chinese in Africa is considered to be disturbing to the US administration, accordingly, it is often said that the US tries to find a way to control the international relations at this part of the continent more efficiently. This discourse can be found among various social groups, from the religious extremist to the liberal groups.

Within this political context the local development agendas and discourses are formulated and negotiated in Sudan. That is to say various development debates and discourses are adopted by various women's NGOs in Sudan. To understand the nature of these variations one need to embed the development debates in both the local and translocal political context.

Local Development Discourses

Currently the most pressing development agenda for both the state and civil organisations are the formation of a new government including the SPLM as partner in governing Sudan, the preparation for election and institutionalisation of a democratic system, and the writing of the new constitution. Among women's NGOs the development debates are also focusing on these issues. Thus the most urgent discourses could be classified in the four categories according to the organisations involved and their translocal networking strategies. These discourses are: firstly the discourse on “engendering” politics in general, which aims at the promotion of equal participation of women in the different political agenda for the peace building phase. The second discourse is the one on Violence Against Women (VAW). It gained special importance particularly after the publishing of various human rights reports on the cases of rape in the region of Darfur. The third discourse is focusing on peace, and aiming at emphasising the role of women in peace making. The forth is a poverty related discourse. In the sections to follow each of these discourses, the actors involved and the various networking relations will be elaborated on.

Engendering Democracy

“Engendering democracy”, “engendering the election”, “engendering peace” or “engendering the constitution” are all discourses and concepts that various women's NGOs are adopting in urban areas and in particular in the capital. Mostly these NGOs are working in fields like legal

aid, advocacy, research and training and with a Gender and Development (GAD) approach. They belong to the locally called “liberal” organisations or activists (see Nageeb 2005). Both the debates and the programmes of these organisations are including wide variations of issues such as human and women's rights, gender mainstreaming, gender equality, gender and conflict, gender and politics, or gender and peace. They work with global development concepts and they are very critical about the state and its Islamist outlook, identity and politics. In a way one could say that these organisations are competing with the state to insure that their agendas are included. But also because their basic assumption is that the politics of the state are not sensitive to women and gender visions, nor democratic. Nowadays these organisations network strongly with women groups and NGOs from the Maghreb area, Egypt and some other Arabic countries. For the engendering debate a dominant strategy these groups are using is to refer to experiences of other Muslim countries or groups in changing the legal, political, economic or administrative structures in a gender sensitive way. This is considered by many activists as an important strategy to negotiate the engendering vision within the frame of an Islamist regime and politics. However, throughout the research other forms of networking with groups from Europe or USA were also observable. Nevertheless, concerning negotiation strategies, the reference to Muslim contexts is considered to be the major one. The activities of these groups are leading to the differentiation of the local discourses on Islam. They refer to Islamic contexts, sources and interpretations to argue in favour of global development concepts.

It is interesting to note that among the Islamist activists or organisations which take part in activities related to the above discourses a new group of “liberal Islamists” women, as they call themselves, is emerging. These are few activists and organisations, nevertheless significant, in the sense that their vision of Islam is all inclusive rather than competitive with the global development concepts. Compared to other Islamist women they do not reject the global development concepts. One of the Islamist women argues “It is all in Islam; we just have to understand it right and not reject it without having really engaged ourselves in trying to deeply understand it.” The “liberal Islamists” have a different standpoint, they arguing as follows “why not accept the global concepts, we as Muslim have to open up for these things. The world is moving fast and we have to move with it. Islam has to change and keep on changing otherwise it will be a dead language” explained on of the activists.

In other words the discourse of the Islamist advocates for returning to the “origin” or the “texts” which is considered to include everything women need. The discourse of the “liberal Islamist” women on the other side, is advocating the opening up of the origin, in the sense of continuously engaging in interpreting the texts according to the global changes and modern need of Muslims particularly Muslim women. It is extremely interesting to observe how these activists argue for global development concepts and how they are forming alliances with liberal women activists. Being identified as Islamists and even NIF members they were more open and confrontational in arguing and debating the need to adopt global development concepts as enrichment for the democratisation process and the building of the new Sudan.

Violence Against Women

Another development discourse adopted by the liberal groups of women's NGOs is VAW. Particularly after the explosion of the conflict in Darfur and the deterioration of women human rights situation due to the cases of rapes, violence against women is representing an important agenda. This discourse, nevertheless, includes various issues like Female Circumcision (FC)/ Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and recently as mentioned before the issue of rape. Various local networks are working on these issues. Some of these networks are registered, meaning they paid the fees, fulfilled the legal and administrative requirements of the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), the state body responsible for registration and follow up of the activities of the civil society organisations. Some other networks are not registered, basically to avoid the expensive and complicated procedures of registration. As well being unregistered, many activists argued, keeps their networking relations freer and decreases the possibility of control from the state. Translocally the violence against women agendas could be considered as the issue which is most intensively networked with other women's NGOs. Specifically significant are the networks with women's NGOs from societies which have the same practices like FC/FGM. The networking with African women's NGOs is viewed by many Sudanese activists to be important. “Arab societies which have the same practices are even more conservative than the Sudanese, we better work with the African groups as their gender and sexual codes are surely better than that of Arabs” explained an activist. However for the issue of rape in Darfur there exists strong networking with various human rights organisation in and outside the continent.

Locally, many of these debates associated with liberal women's organisations are opposed especially by traditional authorities, some state and non-state religious authorities or by activists who belong to Islamist movements. Usually the argument against such development discourses like violence against women, or CEDAW are based on relating these development concepts to a conspiracy theory used by some to explain the relation between the 'West' and the 'Islam'. Particularly in the context of Darfur conflict some religious leaders make it even a "a duty of all Muslims to fight these notions that bring a cold type of colonisation to the Muslim countries", as argued by a well known *Scheikh* about CEDAW while giving a Friday's sermon. The major strategies of the so-called liberal organisations in this context is to use the ideas of other "enlightened" religious authorities and to refer to certain local Islamic figures who can argue that Islam is not against the specific global development concept. By following the negotiation of global development concepts, one could clearly observe different types of Islam discourses active in the public space.

To understand the nature of these discourses it is worth referring to the every-day negotiation strategies of these groups. To "survive" under the frame of an Islamist regime many of the liberal women refer to local "traditional" Islam to compete with the global Islamist discourse of the state. A leftist activist explained this by referring to a confrontational encounter between staff of her organisation and security men. She said "I told the security boys who came to confiscate our office and search for documents which contains ideas against the state as they believe, I told them that you cannot be Sudanese and you cannot be Muslims ...". In various occasions women referred to this discourse on Sudanese *Muslimness* as opposed to "forging" or global Islam. Another activist explained this discourse by saying "the Muslim Sudanese would respect women and not harass them, these practices [of harassing liberal activists] are belonging to this forging Islam." In their every-day life practices these activists often refer to the "traditional" Islam of their mothers and grandmothers, or to a Sudanese Islam that is different from the global Islam. In this way they are able to negotiate their identity and their development agenda. Of similar importance is the way they transform the discourse on "traditional" Islam. The transformation takes place as a result of including global development concepts and values in the frame of a "traditional" Sudanese Islam.

Women and Peace

The discourse on peace, which includes peace and development, engendering peace, and women/gender and peace, could represent a third category or type of development agenda. In this category one can find all types of local NGOs whether “liberal”, Islamist, government affiliated or not, rural and urban. NGOs involved in networks around peace and development are working in different fields. Some of them are particularly focusing on peace. These are mostly newly formed NGOs which came to existence during or directly after the process of peace negotiations. While some others are old NGOs who are working on various issues related to poverty alleviation, income generation or rural development.

Many of the locally registered networks are constituted with reference to the peace discourses. Most of the networking goes through the Dutch Embassy who, through the Women and Development desk, took the initiative of forming the first and biggest network for women and peace. Women's groups from war or conflict regions are also included in these networks. Various other organisations who are closely working with the state and who are known to be led by NIF female activists are members in these networks. The peace agenda of women's organisations can be seen as a development agenda which is not highly challenged by the state. On the contrary the role of women in the peace process is often highlighted by members of the government to emphasise a popular, and not only state controlled, character of the peace negotiations. Particularly the regime and SPLM are often criticised by political activists for having dominated the peace negotiations and left little space for other political factions to influence the writing of the agreement and the negotiation for peace. In addition after signing the agreement the regime is attempting to enlarge the space for other civil groups to participate in the peace process. This step is also significant for NIF to communicate a democratic image of the state to the international community.

Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace (SWEP), the network incited by the Dutch embassy, was able to send representatives as observers to the peace negotiations in Kenya. Such activities are part of the peace groups agenda, however their focus also include “engendering all the post-peace programs, be it rehabilitation, rebuilding or resettlement work”, as explained an activist in SWEP. What is interesting to mention here is that most of the newly registered women's NGOs which are founded by women who are members or sympathisers of NIF are working in the area of peace. Some activists consider this as a

“dangerous development in the NGO scenery, now these groups will get all the facilitation needed from the government, they will be the first to participate in conferences, the first to get funded. But they are actually governmental and they work more for the government than they do for women.”

Poverty and Poverty Related Discourses

“Fighting poverty”, “fighting illiterateness” and/or “fighting illnesses” are considered to be development discourses of women's NGOs who are working mostly with Women in Development (WID) or Women and Development (WAD) approaches. These groups are widely spread in both urban as well as rural areas. They are focusing basically on income generating activities and awareness raising programmes. Some of them, like the General Sudanese Women's Union (GSWU), with its 27 branches all over the country, is working closely with the various institutions of the state. They advocate their activities as directed to “fill in the gaps of the state”, explained the head of the union in a TV interview. Thus the union intensively cooperates with the ministry of social affairs which also include a women affairs department. This organisation is considered to be the umbrella organisation and the official representative for women's NGOs. The political power of the GSWU is observably more than that of other groups. Their position goes more along the side of the conspiracy discourse explaining the interest of the international community in Sudan/ Darfur. Hence, when faced with the issue of rape in Darfur in a TV interview in Aljazira channel, the leader of the GSWU attempted to create doubts around the human rights reports about such cases. She emphasised that rape in general is a crime against women and humanity. Nevertheless, when she was criticised by some other activists she defended the official rather than the position of women's groups. She used the conspiracy discourse to explain the interest of – Western – human rights organisations in shaping a specific image about Sudan. Many of those active in local human rights organisations and in the area of violence against women do not share this opinion.

The union takes part in various state programmes as the representative of women's interests and women's groups. However this opinion is not shared by many NGOs who belong to the so called “liberal” groups and consider the GSWU as representing the state but not women's interests. The networking of GSWU with NGOs which belong to the Islamist groups and to Church organisations is strong. The union as well as some other groups, which are engaged in

poverty reduction work, are combining their activities with missionary activities, be it of Islamic or Christian nature. Obviously the types of activities related to poverty reduction are not representing a challenge to the state or its women's politics. Yet this is not to give the impression that these groups are isolated from other development debates and discourses (as a matter of fact there is a strategic alliance between for example GSWU and some of the none Islamist NGOs). Rather it is emphasised that the approach that the GSWU follows is different and mostly representing a traditional approach to women's issues. Additionally many of the groups belonging to this category are active in various networks like peace, FC/FGM and reproductive health networks. By studying these networking relations it becomes clear that one of the strategies of negotiation the Islamist women are using is co-option of global development discourses. This means they might advocate the same concept, using the Arabic translation of the term such as the Arabic term "*Ensiab elmaràa*" which means "gender mainstreaming", whereas almost all the liberal organisation use the English term. In addition to Arabising the terms, they give it an Islamic frame and advocate it along the line of "reserving our Muslim identity." A university lecturer active in the field of women and development commented about this strategy of negotiation saying "the Islamist women they don't only Arabise terms, they evacuate the feminist concepts from their global frame and identity and give them an Islamic one." In this way they are contributing to the transformation of the state discourse on Islam by making it inclusive rather than exclusive of global development concepts.

Indeed there are various other global development concepts which are adopted by women's NGOs as a local agenda. Concepts like legal rights, women's human rights, CEDAW, reproductive and sexual rights, HIV/AIDS are specifically the interest of women's groups in urban areas. However in this paper the focus was on the development discourses which were directly related to the current development agenda of Sudan, i.e. the post-conflict building phase. In addition most of the groups engaged in the previously mentioned issues are also taking part in activities or networks related to engendering democracy, violence against women and peace and their related discourses and activities.

Some Reflections on the Comparative Approach: A Conclusion

Having discussed the three country cases of this project it is important to reflect the comparative dimensions for the analysis of the three cases of Malaysia, Sudan and Senegal. There are three preliminary dimensions for comparison which became clear after the conduction of the field work. The first dimension refers to the different types of Islamisation processes. The issue of Islamisation represents an important aspect of structuring the negotiation of development concepts. Furthermore it is significant for the analysis of the interrelated processes of social transformations taking place in Muslim societies. The second dimension for comparison is constituted by the main development agendas of the respective states. The focus will be on how the development agenda of the state is structuring the discourses of women's NGOs. Significant also is to analyse the kind of spaces which are constituted by social agents while negotiating the development agenda of the state. The third dimension for comparison is the notion of 'rights' used by women NGOs in the different contexts. These notions of 'rights' in addition to the various spaces and networks which are constituted by women NGOs while negotiating them will be compared and contextualised.

To start with the first dimension, in Malaysia the Islamisation project is steered by the government and largely shaped by the interaction between the government and the Islamist opposition. It is embedded into the ambiguities of a nation building process in a multiethnic society and carried out in the language of political ethnicity. The simultaneity of a state driven Islamisation, affirmative action programmes for Malays and a public discourse on ethnic harmony is one of these ambiguities. Furthermore, the process of Islamisation in Malaysia remains somehow fragmented and incomplete because it is always confronted with its (ethnic) boundaries. At the same time it is implemented through developmentalist state policies and authoritarian modes of governance, which influence the negotiations of development concepts.

In Senegal, however, Islamisation is an ongoing process that is much more shaped by social movements and different forms of local Islam, which have their part in the formation of a Muslim society. The state is assuming a secular position and maintains a silent agreement with the traditional Sufi orders, but finds itself in a conflictive relationship with reformist Islamic organisations, which openly challenge the western oriented outlook of national

development policies. Civil society actors enter in a strategic partnership with the government to counterbalance the influence of popular Islamic movements.

Whereas in Sudan the Islamisation project is currently undergoing a process of change. Islamisation in Sudan was implemented as a project of restructuration guided by a military dictatorship and addressing all spheres of life. Therefore little room for negotiation was left for social actors to influence the direction of change. The current changes in the nature of the project can be understood by referring to the need of the state to open up for a more democratic system because of external pressure. Accordingly the space for negotiation is considerably enlarged.

The second dimension of comparison focuses on the state development agenda. In Malaysia the state is focusing on economic development and controlling all spheres related to development in the classical sense. Little space is left for civil society organisations to address issues related to economic development. The result is that civil actors, including women's NGOs are concentrating on 'rights' oriented discourses.

The picture is comparable in Sudan. The Islamisation project imposed severe limitations for civil organisations. The Islamisation of the economic, social, political and even the military institutions reflected the development discourse of the state. It hindered the engagement of women's organisations in shaping the development agenda. While the state is still monopolising the classic development fields in order to ensure the enforcement of its privatisation policy, there is now an enlargement of the space of civil society in which women's NGOs are allowed to focus on the 'rights' issues, having already been engaged in the poverty alleviation.

The case is considerably different in Senegal, where local Islamic traditions occupy a space separate from the secular Western model of the state. The government allowed women's organisations to develop a long history of engagement in classical development issues. Women's commitment in development and civil organisation became instrumental to the project of nation building. The formulation of a critical development agenda by women's organisations is, hence, reflecting the need to challenge the established gender order and to scrutinise the state's conformist attitude towards gender issues.

To shed light on the notion of 'rights' of women NGOs, i.e. the third dimension for comparison, in all the three cases the field work revealed that the notion of 'rights' represents a field of negotiation that is often shaped by reference to different Islam(s). In addition in Malaysia the negotiation of 'rights' is also shaped by the multi-ethnic dimensions of the society. In relation to Islam it is observable that various discourses on Islam are emerging to support women's call for economic, social and political rights and to challenge the state's or other religious authorities' discourse on Islam. In this sense women redefine the notion of 'rights' according to their situation.

Within the frame of negotiating 'rights' various spaces are constituted. One major space of negotiating development concepts is shaped by the interface between women's NGOs and the state to define 'rights'. In both cases, Malaysia and Sudan, the discourse on VAW and women human rights represent an entry point for women's NGOs. In Malaysia this discourse is less politicised and the state sees no political danger in women's engagement in this discourse as long as they are not 'interfering' in the critical areas of economic development. In Sudan, on the other hand, VAW is a highly politicised issue. Nevertheless it represents an entry point to women's NGOs to engage in civil and political work. This is particularly the case because one important means for the state to change its Islamist outlook is to open the space for NGOs to address human rights issues. In Senegal, however, it is the process of implementing rights which shapes the critical relation of women's NGOs to the state. Within the frame of poverty reduction, as a major development concern of both state and NGOs, women's NGOs enter the area of negotiating rights by developing distance from the state position.

Global notions of 'rights' are not only negotiated at the state level, but also at translocal levels. Notions of 'rights' are developed in global spaces such as the UN conference Beijing and the follow up process of Beijing + 10. However, to advocate or negotiate a specific notion of 'rights' women NGOs are engaged in various types of networks. In the context of the networking relations of women NGOs different kind of identities are constituted. There are the translocal networks of Muslim women who try to conceptualise 'rights' within an Islamic frame. There are also the networks developed around specific issues like CEDAW or VAW which focus on a global rather than a religious frame for 'rights'. In addition to these there are the regionally based networks that emphasise African or Asian regional specificity while formulating and advocating women's 'rights'

As a conclusive remark, by studying the different types of negotiating development concepts the project aims at analysing the transformation processes that take place in Muslim Societies. The concept of translocal gendered spaces is useful for understanding the global and gendered dimensions of the different Islamisation processes. In addition it helps following the relation between global and local notions of 'rights'. Finally working with the concept of translocal gendered spaces is significant for analysing the logic of action of social agents.

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